

THE STUDY OF MAN

POLITICAL THINKING: ANCIENTS VS. MODERNS

The New Battle of the Books

GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB

IT WAS the mark of his age, John Stuart Mill once wrote, that "men may not reason better concerning the great questions in which human nature is interested, but they reason more." Mill was entirely innocent of the faint note of irony which some readers might find in this remark. He intended it simply as an expression of hope and optimism. In the democratic faith of his circle, quantity was held to be as much a good as quality; if men reasoned more, particularly if more men reasoned more, it was unimportant that they reasoned no better. Mill and his friends were heartened to watch the flow of newspapers, journals, pamphlets, and books from the presses and into the hands of a steadily growing public. And they decided that what technology had done to promote the habit of reading, science might do to promote the habit of reasoning.

Thus, at a time when political democracy was still in its infancy, ingenious men were already devising schemes for the establishment of a democracy of intellect. The common denominator of this democracy was to be the

scientific habit of mind. Knowledge, it was hoped, would be emancipated from the individual knowers. Instead of the vagaries of thought by which the privileged few stumbled upon intuitions of truth, there was to be a prescribed logic of inquiry by which all rational and conscientious men could collectively arrive at this truth. The operations of the mind were to become as simple, unambiguous, and anonymous as the operations of the ballot. Having come this far in revolutionizing knowledge, it was not long before men more enthusiastic than Mill were claiming for their new science not only the superiority of quantity but also the superiority of quality. The boldest of all, Auguste Comte, divided the history of humanity into three stages, of which the first two, the theological and metaphysical, were sunk in myth, legend, and superstition, and only the third, the "positive age," could aspire to "positive knowledge."

For a century or so now we have been living under the new dispensation. Earnest men have favored us with manifestoes and programs for the dissemination of scientific methods, and scores of monographs have labored to apply these methods to the study of man as a political and social animal. There is an even greater abundance of reason abroad than Mill would have thought possible. And in the opinion of some, it is of far poorer quality than Mill could have suspected.

Distressed by the excessive quantity and too often inferior quality of modern political and moral thought, a group of malcontents has taken refuge in the metaphysics of the past. The old orthodoxy has become the new heresy, claiming, as do all heresies, to liberate men from the shackles of dogma—this time the dogma that only through science or democracy,

FROM the heavy volume of writings on political theory published in recent months, GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB selects for discussion a number of books which represent two extreme—and influential—approaches to the problems of politics: the approach of the political philosopher and that of the political scientist. The clash between these two views is evident in one form or another in all current discussions of the nature of politics. Miss Himmelfarb is the editor of *Essays on Freedom and Power* by Lord Acton, and the author of a study of Lord Acton to be published this fall by the University of Chicago Press. She holds a PhD from the University of Chicago.

or a combination of the two, can men arrive at the truth. No anonymous or collective enterprises, say the heretics, can compensate for the individual genius of old, and no amount of methodical workmanship can substitute for wisdom, inspiration, and insight. Like most heretics, these invoke the authority of the past to discredit the present. A new "Battle of the Books" is under way, with the "moderns" representing science and the "ancients" classical philosophy. If the new heretics, the "ancients," sometimes seem to be as dogmatic and unyielding as their opponents, that is the nature of heresy. There is a third party, committed to the extravagancies of neither sect, which agrees with the heretics, however, that much of what passes for modern enlightenment is superstition and much of what passes for ancient superstition is wisdom.

IN POLITICAL theory especially, the lines between ancients and moderns, between philosophers and scientists, are sharply drawn. Political theory has suffered in recent years the same fate as the other social sciences: a plethora of writing and a paucity of imagination. It is significant that what imagination there is has been expended upon that discipline which is closest to the heart of the ancients—the discipline of exegesis. Perhaps the wisest and most penetrating among contemporary political philosophers is Professor Leo Strauss of the University of Chicago, author of *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes* (Oxford University Press, 1936); *On Tyranny: An Interpretation of Xenophon's Hiero* (Political Science Classics, New York, 1948; reprinted by Free Press, Glencoe, Ill., 1950); the Walgreen Lectures on "Natural Law" (to be published by the University of Chicago Press this year, and of which a chapter has appeared in the *Review of Politics*, October 1950); and essays on Spinoza, Rousseau, and medieval Hebrew thought. Educated in Germany, Strauss has brought to political philosophy a training acquired in the study of the Greek and Hebrew classics. He reads his classical texts closely and precisely, as do the philologist and the Talmudist. And he respects his texts as few moderns do.

Most exegeses today are written by men who look down upon the foibles of the past from the superior vantage of the present, and tolerantly (sometimes not so tolerantly) explain, so as to explain away, the philosophy of a thinker by reference to the political quarrels

of his time, the domestic arrangements of his household, or the private complexes of his psyche. This is not Strauss's way. On the assumption that great minds—in this lies their greatness—transcend these ephemera, Strauss attends to nothing but their ideas. Great minds are great for all time, not only for their own time. And the basic categories of political thought, like greatness of mind, are immutable. Natural right, or justice, does not change its character just because, as the historicists seem to think, men's opinions about it have changed. Truth does not change; only beliefs do. "Philosophizing," Strauss says, "means to ascend from the cave to the light of the sun, that is, to the truth." The truths contemplated by a Plato are worthy of contemplation by us.

No sociologist or psychoanalyst, Strauss can only hope to understand the philosopher the way the philosopher understood himself. If Xenophon (in common with other philosophers of antiquity) was much preoccupied with the question, "Is the tyrant happy?"—Strauss must assume that the question is significant even if it sounds puerile to the modern ear. He finds, in fact, in that one modest, homely question, overtones of the perennial questions of philosophy: the nature of man and his happiness, pleasure and virtue, morality and nature, justice and power, private and public morality, the natural and the best state, piety and law, the ruler and the ruled. Without bombast or professional obscurantism, Strauss pursues the common-sense inquiries of Xenophon: If the tyrant must fear assassination, how can he be happy? If he is unhappy, why does he not retire from public office? If he needs power only in order to be secure, how can he be said to be secure when he is in danger of death? If he seeks only sensual gratification, could he not better achieve this in private life? To answer these questions, it turns out, is to answer some of the most important questions of political philosophy.

It is no simple task to understand the philosopher as he understood himself, for Strauss has found that one of the obligations of the philosophical enterprise is the occasional veiling, often at critical points, of the real meaning or significance of an idea. There appears to be a body of private, esoteric teachings in most great philosophers that is available only to the prudent disciple and that is concealed from the irresponsible public. When Xenophon seems to be arguing for tyranny, that may be

only a device by which to establish the case for law and legitimacy. When Maimonides takes pains to argue for the scrupulous observance of ritual and law, it is perhaps an intimation that ritual and law must be observed even when they cannot be believed. The assumption is that nothing in the text is said or left unsaid heedlessly. Strauss himself, in the style of great philosophy, writes deliberately and precisely, so deliberately that one must read him as carefully as he would have us read others. (So deliberately, too, that one might almost suspect him of harboring esoteric theories of his own. "I have not dotted all the i's," he hints in the interpretation of Xenophon.)

One of Strauss's main services to political philosophy has been pedagogic. He has taught students to take the great thinkers of the past seriously. And he has taught them that exegesis, which is the greatest compliment one philosopher can pay another, can be more productive of insights than the speculations of those who feel that the fact of their having come late into this world gives them an advantage over all those who preceded them. "It goes without saying," Strauss writes, "that I never believed that my mind was moving in a larger 'circle of ideas' than Xenophon's mind." That it can move so freely within that circle of ideas is praise enough for any man. The commentator, in the Hebrew tradition, is the philosopher par excellence, and so it is with Strauss.

A MORE conventional work in exegesis is that of a colleague of Strauss's at the University of Chicago, Professor David Grene, who recently published a study of the political philosophy of Thucydides and Plato under the title of *Man in His Pride* (University of Chicago Press, 1950). Grene's is more a historical than textual analysis. Both Thucydides and Plato, in his account, are decidedly men of their time. In the case of Thucydides, this is no more than natural. The Peloponnesian War was not only the substance of his life; it was also the subject matter of his thought. That Plato's experience in Sicily, his attempt to make of a king a philosopher, was equally relevant to his philosophy is less obvious. It may be objected that it was not the exigencies of the situation in Sicily that determined Plato's philosophy but rather his philosophy that determined the course of the experiment

in Sicily. Just this superiority of philosophy to history is what is commonly implied by Platonism.

If Grene's method is historical, however, his motive is always philosophical. The historian, Thucydides, must qualify as a philosopher to capture Grene's interest. The theme of his book is that Thucydides at the one end and Plato at the other represent the limits of the movement of political philosophy in the West. At opposite reaches of the mind, they have sought answers to the fundamental questions of political philosophy: What is the natural, or best, political order? How can political power be justified?

The standard interpretation of Plato has the philosopher starting as a mystic and visionary and ending up as a practical man of politics, or even a scientist. With this interpretation, Grene takes issue. In his view, Plato became not less but more mystical in his later years, more intent upon the ideal, which was the real, world of form and order concealed behind the world of the senses, and more convinced than ever that politics without philosophy was meaningless, that power without justice was intolerable. As an old man, Plato set down an account of his youthful enthusiasm for political reform and his eventual disillusionment: "At last I saw that as far as all states now existing are concerned, they are all badly governed. For the condition of their laws is bad almost past cure, except for some miraculous accident. So I was compelled to say, in praising true philosophy, that it was from it alone that one was able to discern all true justice, public and private. And so I said that the nations of men will never cease from trouble until either the true and genuine breed of philosophers shall come to political office or until . . . the rulers in the states shall by some divine ordinance take to the true pursuit of philosophy."

As Socrates was, for Plato, the archetype of the philosopher, the model of justice and wisdom, so Socrates' conviction and sentence to death by Athens was taken by him as evidence of the radical evil and injustice of the state. In memory of Socrates, and to avenge his death, he dedicated himself to the philosopher's quest for justice, wisdom, and truth. A man might choose to keep quiet and mind his own business, content to live a gracious life, careful to commit neither impiety nor injustice in a world that is both impious and unjust. This, Plato admits, would be no small achieve-

ment. For the philosopher, however, it is not enough. He must seek the ideal both on his own account and on that of society, "for in the state that fits him he himself will attain greater proportions and along with his private salvation will save the community as well." The philosopher, Plato seems to be saying, cannot see justice clearly if he does not see himself as the ruler of the state. Even if the idea of the philosopher-king is impractical as a concrete, political goal, it may be the only way to arrive at the ideas of truth and justice.

THUCYDIDES was concerned with the same problems of justice and power as his contemporary, Plato, but where Plato saw in the state justice "writ large," Thucydides saw only power. It was his purpose to assuage the conscience of Athens—not for the death of Socrates (which may have occurred only after Thucydides' own death), but for that other trial of conscience to which Athens was subjected, the Peloponnesian War.

The material of Thucydides' history is, to a remarkable extent, the material of present-day history. When Athens and Sparta, the freemen of Greece, together defeated the superior military forces of Persian despotism, Greece took its victory as the proper reward of justice. Succeeding events, however, shocked the Greek sense of moral propriety. The allies fell out, each coveting the other's empire, and within the memory of living men, the struggle for freedom became a cynical struggle for power. Unlike previous and later empires, Athens scorned to resort to the dubious sanction of religion or a hypocritical concern for the welfare of its subjects. The strategy of Thucydides, Athens' advocate both against its enemies abroad and dissidents at home, was to defend imperialism as the normal and natural behavior of states. "No one can be blamed," he has the Athenian envoys to Sparta say, shortly before the outbreak of the war, "with matters of the greatest consequence at stake, for disposing of the risks to his own best advantage." No nation is deterred, by the argument of justice, from pursuing its best interest, if it has the power to obtain that interest. The established rule of politics is that the liberty of the weaker is curtailed by the power of the stronger. Men rule whatever they can master. "We have not laid down this law nor were we the first to follow it when laid down; we but took it over, followed it, and

will leave it after us, a thing already existing and destined to exist forever."

Athens and Thucydides between them taught the world to regard power not as a means but as an end. As long as human nature remained the same, and there was every reason to suppose it would, men would lust after power for no better motive than the desire for power. Since this was the natural state of affairs, Thucydides concluded that it would be futile to will it otherwise. "Justice" was only one of the many "fair words" with which men adorned their speech, attempting to deceive the weak and stupid. Morality was but another name for the conventions which keep a society in order.

YET even Thucydides, the progenitor of Machiavelli and Hobbes, made his obeisance, after a fashion, to justice and morality. The Athenian envoys, arguing their case by proxy of the historian, contradict themselves by claiming first that they behaved exactly as any other people would have in a similar situation, and then that they had behaved better than the others: "Those deserve praise who, while following the dictates of man's nature and ruling others, still prove juster than their own strength would warrant. At least, we think that if others took over our empire, they would have proved conclusively how moderate we are; yet in our case, thanks to our decent behavior, we have got a bad name rather than a good one, and this is most unreasonable." In a few instances—for example, when describing the barbarous murder of the entire population of one small town—Thucydides permits himself the rare luxury of indulging in moral indignation: this is because evil was done wantonly, beyond the needs of the situation. When men are wicked by choice, Thucydides admits that moral comment is in order.

It is sometimes enough, particularly in the controversy between states (for "Athens vs. Sparta" one may read "America vs. Russia"), to put the moral argument in its most modest form, as Thucydides did: we have only done what had to be done; we have not killed as barbarians but as soldiers. Yet the concession to justice was greater than Thucydides intended. In denying that empires are governed by justice, he unwittingly affirmed the reality of something called justice, even though it is more often conspicuous by its absence than by its presence. For over two thousand years,

if Athens and Thucydides be taken as the founders of "political realism," nations have violated every precept of justice, and there have been those who have solemnly read the idea out of existence. Yet neither the testimony of our senses nor the reasoning of our betters has succeeded in eliminating the consciousness of justice (and injustice) from our minds, or even in removing it from the highest position in political and moral philosophy. "The extraordinary feature of the Athenian empire," Grene observes, "is that the Athenians built it with nothing to stand between themselves and the suffering and injustice they caused; that they faced it all together, every one of them, in individual moral responsibility all the time." "Suffering," "injustice," "moral responsibility"—this may be at the opposite moral pole from Plato, but it is assuredly within the same universe of philosophical discourse.

IN A totally different universe of discourse is the kind of political thought to which the "moderns" are partial and which is currently known as political science. Political science is not content merely to give novel answers to the traditional problems of political philosophy. It denies the meaningfulness of the questions themselves. In keeping with the professions of "positive" science, it refuses to be distracted, by metaphysical and moral speculations, from the only meaningful task: the creation of an empirically grounded, scientific system of politics.

Between Thucydides and the political scientist there are obvious points of resemblance. Both pride themselves on their hard-headed, realistic confrontation of the facts of political life. Both see in power the basic, sometimes the only, fact of politics. Yet Thucydides is within the tradition of political philosophy while political science remains stubbornly outside of it. For Thucydides, the drama of politics comes from the necessity to be immoral. No matter how often justice is defeated, or how predictable its defeat may be, it is always a contender in the political arena; it exists to try men's consciences and provide the plots for tragedy. The political scientist, on the other hand, would like to know nothing of conscience or tragedy. To him, justice regarded as a moral abstraction or absolute is often little more than a feeble memory left over from the pre-scientific age of myths and heroes.

Again, for Thucydides, the facts of life are hard, ineluctable, and man is a prisoner both of nature and history. The political scientist, generally an optimist by temperament, regards man as a plastic creature able to do with himself what he would, and history as a bad dream which daylight brings to an end.

THE most recent and most ambitious product of political science, *Power and Society* (Yale University Press, 1950), is the work of two of the ablest men in the field. Harold D. Lasswell of Yale is generally acknowledged to be the dean of political science in America, and Abraham Kaplan, a young philosopher now at the University of California, is a distinguished student of Rudolf Carnap, the logical positivist. As might be expected from such a collaboration, the book opens with a statement of the difference between political science and political philosophy. (Like much writing influenced by semantics and symbolic logic, this volume numbers the sub-sections within the chapters, and it is disconcerting to find that the discussion of philosophy and science, contained in the introduction, bears the humble tag "o.i.") Formally, political philosophy is taken to include the two categories of political science and political doctrine, political science being concerned with what is, political doctrine with what ought to be. In fact, however, throughout the book political philosophy is generally used as a synonym for political doctrine and in contradistinction to political science. Their own work Lasswell and Kaplan describe as falling exclusively within the province of science.

There is more, however, intended in this than a staking out of conflicting claims. Lasswell and Kaplan are less concerned with limiting their own sphere of operations than with eliminating their competitors. After amiably assigning boundaries to science and philosophy, they proceed to cut the ground out from under the feet of philosophy. The practice of political philosophy, it becomes apparent, is regarded as a not quite legitimate enterprise in this advanced age. Theories of "what ought to be," of the "right, good, and proper," are deemed to be somewhat disreputable, and not at all a seemly preoccupation for the serious thinker. To Lasswell and Kaplan, theories of this sort are merely the expressions of men's prejudices and preferences; they are ideologies intended to legitimize and justify political power

in the eyes of the world, to act as a convenient façade behind which the realities of power can function undisturbed. The scientist, dispassionately observing the ways of men, uses these philosophies as empirical case studies of what men believe, or think they believe. The philosophical doctrines of Plato, then, are of no more permanent validity and objective significance than the religious rites of the Australian aborigines or the voting habits of American citizens. Philosophy is informative the way lies are informative, not the way truths are; it tells the scientist something about the pathology of the philosopher, but nothing about the objective nature of reality.

It is in keeping with this conception of science that Lasswell and Kaplan take, as the subject matter of their study, the composition and distribution of "values"—values being understood in their sociological sense, as the wealth, power, and prestige which men in a given society happen to seek. These values are alone deemed to be real. They can be touched, measured, tested, assigned numerical quantities, and arranged in charts and graphs. The values of the philosopher, such as wisdom, truth, and justice, do not enter into the calculations of the scientist. Whether the good, the true, and the just are, as a previous work of Lasswell's had it,* symbols of "ego insecurity" by means of which the individual "concentrates and removes his tensions," or, as the present work maintains, the rationalizations that induce men to submit to authority, they are evasive and unsatisfactory compared with the tangibles of wealth, power, and prestige.

THERE would be little point in quarreling with political science, as Lasswell and Kaplan understand it, were it not that science, in their sense, is inimical to philosophy, in Strauss's sense. This is not true of all brands of political science. There is a variety of political science, less enterprising and more humble than that of Lasswell and Kaplan, which is frankly, exclusively empirical. The experts in public administration, voting behavior, and the structure of legislation perform a valuable func-

**World Politics and Personal Insecurity*, originally published in 1934, and reprinted, together with works by Charles E. Merriam and T. V. Smith, under the title *A Study of Power*, Free Press, Glencoe, Ill., 1950. Three other works of Lasswell have been republished by the Free Press in *The Political Writings of Harold D. Lasswell* (1951).

tion in amassing facts about the mundane workings of politics. Political philosophy does not deny the legitimacy of this order of political science; nor does this political science infringe upon the domain of philosophy. To accredit the study of urban and rural differences regarding party affiliation, pressure groups, or political influence is not to discredit the study of the nature of justice in the state or the relation between private and public morality.

Lasswell and Kaplan, however, scorn to be mere collators of facts. On the contrary, against the "brute empiricists," they oppose a loftier conception of political science: "Of themselves, of course, 'facts' are mere collections of details; they are significant only as data for hypotheses." These hypotheses are intended to elucidate the basic concepts, processes, and activities implicit in the logic of political science. This too might be a legitimate conception of political science and need not necessarily interfere with the inquiries of political philosophy. It only becomes a challenge to philosophy when, as in the work of Lasswell and Kaplan, the hypotheses they formulate deny to the concepts of philosophy the status of objective reality: when the concept of power is treated as objective reality but the concept of justice is not, when "interests" are deemed a satisfactory tool of political analysis and "morals" are not.

Science, we are often told, is willing to sacrifice all of the amenities of civilization—sentiment, style, and moral indignation—upon the altar of truth. Truth is indeed worthy of the greatest sacrifices; but it would be tragic were the sacrifice to be in vain, were it to prove that what is sacrificed is truth itself. Consider the dilemma of the political scientist who has engaged to analyze the most important phenomenon of our time, the concentration camp. Presumably, he would have to refrain from such obvious expressions of judgment as cruelty, inhumanity, barbarousness, savagery, horror, atrocity, ignominy, degradation. Yet not to use these words, or their moral equivalents, would be to ignore the most important facts about the camps and to miss their significance in human history. To think of them in the judicial manner prescribed by political science is to think of them as the Nazis did. There could be no greater perversion of truth.

Lasswell and Kaplan seem determined to spurn every amenity of civilization. They take nothing on faith, neither facts, nor words, nor

the meaning of words. With a clean slate and an open mind, they undertake to build up a system of political science. Their method consists in the definition of concepts and in the statement of propositions ("empirical hypotheses") about these concepts. Some key concepts the authors regret having to leave undefined, on the plea that concepts can only be defined in terms of other concepts and that the circularity of this process must be broken at some point. They reason: "In most cases, of course, we assume that undefined terms will be understood in the sense intended." This assumption, common to all normal prose writing, the authors all too infrequently put to use. The embarrassing fact is that it is not the undefined terms but the defined ones that give the reader difficulty, and often not so much the terms themselves as the definitions. The way to systematize, it is presumed, is to be abstract, and the way to be abstract is to replace all verbs by nouns. A passage such as the following may, if read repeatedly and patiently, offer some meaning: "From the conception of value in terms of an *act* [authors' italics] of valuing, it follows that values are conflicting, facilitative, or compatible according as the acts of valuation are such. Conflict and facilitation of values are not deducible from incompatibilities or consonance of symbolizations, but depend on the relations of the acts in which the valuations consist. Agreement or divergence in professed aims, for example, is not determinative (and often not even a reliable index) of facilitation or conflict of the relevant values." Having read this, and then reread it, it does not help much to go back to the previous page where value is defined as "a desired event, a goal event," and "valuation" as "the act of valuing." And it comes as an anticlimax to realize that after all these laborious distinctions, the authors themselves redundantly speak of "acts of valuation." (Or can they mean by this "acts of the act of valuing"?)

IN ACADEMIC, as in scientific, society, there is a tradition that to criticize a man's style is somehow not fair play. The fifth freedom seems to be the right to write badly. Yet when a man not only writes badly but also prescribes his mode of writing as the only one proper to serious political analysis, then others can surely protest. It is a matter of dispute whether the scorned terms of philosophy, such as "soul," "spirit," or "idea," are any more trivial or

meaningless than "the principle of configurative analysis," which grammatically implies analysis *by* configuration, but may be intended to mean analysis *of* configurations. (And what is so unique about this kind of analysis?) It is also questionable whether they are any more spurious than such a term as "tension level," which carries an exciting air of scientific precision and novelty entirely lacking in its exact equivalent, "the level of tension." (The authors do not pretend to assign a definite numerical quantity to any particular "tension level," although they admit that if it is to be useful there should be a set of "empirical indices" which would relate the term to the "experiential situation." Unfortunately, the social sciences are characterized by "index instability," which makes it impossible to "metrize" or "quantify" hypotheses. They are further incapacitated, it would seem, by "the principle of situational reference," which provides that every generalization be restricted to "specified social conditions.") Nor does the capitalization of nouns, for which German philosophy has been so heartily rebuked, deface the printed page more than the italicization of words and whole sentences, as if the words themselves cannot be trusted to convey the whole meaning, and as if commonplaces are thereby transmuted into profundities: "*Control of the key values* [power, wealth, etc.] *exercises a stronger determinative effect upon the control of all values than is exerted by the control of nonkey values.*" (And what is a "determinative effect" other than an effect?)

At one point in their book, Lasswell and Kaplan rate some of the classics of political thought according to the proportion of philosophy (judgments and evaluations) and science (facts and empirical hypotheses) in a sample of their pages: Aristotle's *Politics* yields the ratio of 25 to 75; Rousseau's *Social Contract* 45 to 55; Laski's *Grammar of Politics*, 20 to 80; and Machiavelli's *Prince*, 0 to 100. Machiavelli, if this sample is trustworthy, approximates the authors' ideal of political science. Yet it should be observed that Machiavelli achieved this distinction without mincing words; vanity and greed are vanity and greed in his pages, not, as Lasswell and Kaplan might have put it, a governing propensity and pattern of demands for the gratification of the system of interests of the ego. (To Lasswell and Kaplan, vanity and greed are hardly proper subjects for definition, so that I have been

obliged to use here a telescoped version of their definition of "interest.") More important is the fact that when Machiavelli calmly read morality out of political thought he read immorality into it. Politics, to be sure, was no more corrupt after Machiavelli than before. What seems to have become corrupted was political thought, which now knew more, perhaps, about the corruptness of politics but no longer knew how to speak out against it.

FORTUNATELY, men, even political scientists, are generally less corrupt than their theories would make them. After all their warnings against the "normatively ambiguous" statements in which judgment creeps in to contaminate the purity of science, the authors themselves succumb to the human weakness of ambiguity. "Our own values," they confess, "are those of the citizen of a society that aspires toward freedom. Hence we have given special attention to the formulation of conditions favorable to the establishment and continuance of a free society." They hasten to add, however, that they are "not concerned with the justification of democratic values, their derivation from some metaphysical or moral base." Although it is hard to conceive of anything more important for the establishment and continuance of a free society than the moral and metaphysical justification of democratic values, it is nevertheless interesting to watch political science confronting, even on its own terms, the problem of freedom.

However valiantly the authors labor to treat democracy and liberty with the same obtuse impartiality accorded to all other concepts, their moral instincts get the better of them. When that happens, all caution goes by the board. Essential distinctions are blurred, previous hypotheses are forgotten, and the authors deliver themselves of a message of optimism regarding the viability of democracy that is suspiciously akin to a declaration of faith. Although liberty, democracy, commonwealth, republic, and juridical rule are all separately defined, they are not adequately distinguished one from the other. Liberty is associated with democracy, democracy with liberty, and all good things with all other good things in such a way that the identity of each is lost in a haze of congeniality. The great insight of political philosophy and the experience of history, that liberty can be aristocratic and democracy despotic, is forgotten in the desire

to claim both liberty and democracy for their side. The concept of elites and power groups, which was their mainstay through two hundred pages of tortuous text and ingenious charts, deserts them at the end, and nowhere is democracy made to cope with what they themselves regard as the elementary facts of politics. Instead, the authors make shift with such dubious hypotheses as that "the stability of democratic rule varies with the degree of politicization of conduct," and "disinterest in political relations and practices is an abdication of self-responsibility." Even if one takes "disinterest" to mean lack of interest, and not impartiality, the fact remains that it is not democracy but Nazism and Communism that require the more highly politicized public. Since totalitarianism is literally the attempt to engage the total sentiments of the people, it is in Russia (as in Nazi Germany) that political apathy is a crime against the state; in England and America it is, as often as not, a convenience.

The attempt to construct a scientific system out of the materials of platitudes may be more than a minor misfortune. In the concern with categories and principles that have no better reason for existence than the artificial requirements of a system or the horizontal and vertical blanks created by a chart, the most obvious facts of common sense and common observation may escape.

Auguste Comte, while composing his great work on "social physics," deliberately abstained from reading anything at all—journals, newspapers, scientific or philosophical treatises—that might bear on his *Positive Philosophy*. This "cerebral hygiene," as he called it, has apparently passed on to his descendants.

This is a strange way to court knowledge. There is something truly perverse in the distrust of the learning and experience of others. That all of past mankind should be regarded as benighted is strange enough, but stranger still is the apparent conviction that one or even a few men can do what the collective wisdom of centuries could not.

In the first great "Battle of the Books," in the 17th century, the moderns claimed to see further than the ancients only by virtue of standing on the shoulders of the ancients. The moderns of today spurn such artificial aids. Raising themselves by their own bootstraps, they hope to tower above many centuries of thinking men.